

My Life With The Thrill Kill Kult

Do You Fear For Your Child?

BY SCOTT CRAWFORD

Imagine yourself bored, stoned and flipping through the channels, scraping around for something decent on late night T.V. Along the way, you find a televangelist promising eternal salvation for a pledge of twenty dollars or more, an old gothic horror flick complete with human sacrifices and bad organ music, and a low-budget '70s roller-disco movie filled with teen superstars who've been on the Betty Ford plan for the past ten years or so. Now imagine stirring all of this up, adding a diverse, layered musical sound that is both dreamlike and antagonistic, catchy and yet at times brooding, and you've captured the sound of My Life With The Thrill Kill Kult.

The Chicago-based band, whose membership includes Groovie Mann (vocals) and Buzz McCoy (keyboards), has been in existence since late 1987, when a film project of theirs somehow mutated into their self-titled EP. It begins with "First Cut," a hypnotic, pulsating piece of audio assault which would be renamed, remixed and rereleased twice on their later records. This 3-song 12" would be just the start of their warped, trashy escapade throughout the dark side of life.

Toward the end of 1988, TTK recorded their first LP, **I SEE GOOD SPIRITS AND I SEE BAD SPIRITS**. The album begins with "Heresy," a haunted twisting waltz of the dead which begins to show their transcendence of the "rules" of techno-industrial music. As we progress, we are exposed to such art-terrorism as "Do You Fear (For Your Child)?," the antagonistic "Easy Girl," and the incredibly sinister "Gateway To Hell," which begins with the sample, 'You want danger, huh? I'll show you what danger is, baby.' Clearly, this is a band that enjoys pushing all the wrong buttons, and with "Gateway To Hell," Thrill Kill Kult accomplished just that, as the song was used in a special on satanic music on the Christian fundamentalist "John Ankerberg Show." Quite ironic then, that their next EP, **SOME HAVE TO DANCE, SOME HAVE TO KILL**, included a song entitled "Nervous Xians" (pronounced Nervous Christians). I wonder if they knew?

The band embarked on two tours in 1989, the first to promote **SOME HAVE TO DANCE...**, and the second to promote the release of "Kooler Than Jesus," an infectious little bit of playful sacrilege that became their most popular song to date. They coupled this tune with "Devil Bunnies," a surprisingly bluesy number by Thrill Kill Kult's erstwhile collaborators, the Bomb Gang Girz. The song is an ode to the innocent days of psychotronic biker flicks ala Russ Meyer, with all the necessary trashy sexual innuendos thrown in for good measure. Faster Pussycat, Kill, Kill!

The next chapter in the strange saga of My Life With The Thrill Kill Kult began in March of 1990 with the release of their second album, **CONFESIONS OF A KNIFE...**. Again, the band's penchant for assaulting icons is demonstrated, this time on the album cover, which is a picture of a rather sacred-looking outdoor restroom. Oh well, when ya gotta go!

CONFESIONS... opens with the words 'I live for drugs,' which segues into "A Daisy Chain 4 Satan," a screeching but immanently danceable tribute to hallucinogenic chemicals. Gee, these guys really know how to make enemies. "The Days Of Swine And Roses" is next, and is perhaps the most intense song TTK have ever recorded, with its throbbing bassline and taunting chorus of "Christian Zombie Vampires." Other standouts on the record are the S&M anthem "Waiting For Momme," "Ride The Mindway," and "Rivers Of Blood, Years Of Darkness."

It was on the **CONFESIONS...** tour in the summer of '90 that I first caught Thrill Kill Kult live. Smoke filled the



stage as two menacing figures manned their positions wearing leather face harnesses, and launched into TTK's signature song, "And This Is What The Devil Does." Suddenly, as strobes flashed, a third figure entered wearing leather pants and a skull cap with devil horns. Could it be... Satan?

As the show progressed, the devil horns gave way to long, wavy locks, and this demonic presence sang in a gut wrenching, intoxicating non-voice that resembled the manifestation of possession — all while a tall, dark, evil woman made advances towards both him and a seemingly entranced crowd. 'And this is what the devil does!'

TKK have recently released a new album, **SEXPLOSION**, a decadent celebration of leather bars and Gloria Gaynor records, and a good natured stab in the back of the '70s revival scene. The influence is deliciously obvious on such tracks as "Leathersex," "A Martini Built For Two," and the title track.

The band is currently on tour, bartender and all (no kidding), and when the "international sin set" touched down at City Gardens in Trenton, New Jersey, I had the chance to talk to Groovie Mann and Buzz McCoy.



The perils of Betty Page, the heroine in Thrill Kill Kult's **SEXPLOSION**.

Upon heading toward the back of the bus to do the interview, a somewhat frazzled Groovie declared to the band and I, "I need my walker!" But as soon as we found a comfortable spot near a poster of Pope John Paul (that Bomb Gang Girl Ava Luscious stole from a church), we began to talk.

"The concept for **SEXPLOSION** just happened, with the way things were going with the band," says Groovie with a smirk. "The tour is going well. The show at the Building (in N.Y.C.) was great; it was pretty well received. This is about our eighth show of the tour. We have about forty or fifty shows to go over the next seven weeks." [gasp]

Just then, keyboard whiz Buzz McCoy enters the room, and our conversation shifts to the samples Thrill Kill Kult use in their songs. I ask them if they have a large video library at home that they pick samples from, or if they just sit up all night caffeinated-out watching cablevision?

"We just kind of find stuff," replies Groovie. "Things just kind of catch our ears. There's nothing we really dig into. We don't sit around and waste time trying to find stuff."

A surprisingly softspoken Buzz adds, "Yeah, they just come to us. We'll just be sitting around and we'll hear something and we'll go, 'Hey, what was that?' [laughter] Then we have to go chase it down right then and there, otherwise it's just to use to us."

So what's next for these purveyors of the perverse after the tour? "A rock opera," Groovie informs us, "about Satan-

ic heavy metal suicides..."

"The usual," I add, which provokes more laughter.

"There'll still be a twist to it, of course," says Groovie, as if we had to guess.

I end the interview with a more general question: "What are your favorite movies?" Groovie answers, "'The Tenant' by Roman Polanski." And then a silent Buzz pauses and comes up with two, "Devil's Angel" and "Run Angel Run."

John Ankerberg, beware!

